

are Lower to the things which are higher through the things which are intermediate. According to the law of the universe all things are not reduced to order equally and immediately ; but the lowest through the intermediate, the intermediate through the higher."¹¹

Thus social institutions assume a character which may almost be called sacramental, for they are the outward and imperfect expression of a supreme spiritual reality. Ideally conceived, society is an organism of different grades, and human activities form a hierarchy of functions, which differ in kind and in significance, but each of which is of value on its own plane, provided that it is governed, however remotely, by the end which is common to all. Like the celestial order, of which it is the dim reflection, society is stable, because it is straining upwards : '^'

Anzi & formale ad esto beato
 esse
 Tenersi dentro alia divina
 voglia,
 Per ch' una fansi nostre
 voglie stesse.

Needless to say, metaphysics, however sublime, were not the daily food of the Middle Ages, any more than of to-day. The fifteenth century saw an outburst of commercial activity and of economic speculation, and by "the middle of it all this teaching was becoming antiquated. Needless to say, also, general ideas cannot be kept in compartments, and the teleology of

mediaeval speculation coloured the interpretation of common affairs, as it was coloured by physics in the eighteenth century and by the idea of evolution in the nineteenth. If the first legacy of the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century was the idea of religion as embracing all aspects of human life, the second and third flowed naturally from the working of that idea in the economic environment of the time. They may be called, respectively, the functional view of class organization, and the doctrine of economic ethics. From the twelfth century to the sixteenth, from